SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ISLAM

social justice in islam

Deina Abdelkader

WESTERN theoretical approaches of modernization, development, social progress and interaction, have failed to understand the dynamics of the Islamic revival. Deina Abdelkader, in this seminal work argues that questions of social justice are indelibly tied to the phenomenon of contemporary Islamic resurgence as the quest for social justice is in fact motivated by the Shari'ah – hence an integral part of Islamic life and *weltanshauung*.

Using the two sources of *maqāṣid* and *maṣlāḥah*, and through the examination of the dialectical link between fiqh and reality, the author shows their indispensability as important methodological tools for the study of the social sciences and, indeed, of social phenomena.

"[Dr. Deina's] conclusions not only support the assertions of those who say that Islamic jurisprudence has methodologies and tools that can be used successfully for the study of social phenomena throughout the Muslim world; they also form the nucleus of an Islamic metholodology that can be further developed to enable it to bring about the progress, which the social sciences are still striving to achieve."
[From the Introduction by DR. TAHA J. AL ALWANI]

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Preface

The issue of using *uṣūl al fiqh* (the sources of Islamic law) as a methodological tool for studying social sciences emerged in recent decades as the idea of the Islamization of knowledge reached a more clearly defined and concrete form. Indeed, initial studies were concerned with how to approach the legacy of Islam and attempted to crystallize a methodology for dealing with that legacy. This use of the sources of Islamic law in the study of social sciences stirred up considerable debate among Shari'ah scholars and specialists in the social sciences. Although these differences of opinion have not yet been resolved, several researchers have made serious attempts to test some of these sources—particularly those which are considered "disputed sources" or "rational sources"—by using them in their studies of social issues and phenomena.

Dr. Sayf 'Abd al Fattah was one of the first who embarked on this venture when he used the two sources of *sadd al dharā'i* (preventing the use of lawful means for an unlawful end) and *maṣlaḥah* (the sourcing of an acknowledged interest in the Shari'ah) in his doctoral thesis in political science. He was followed by Dr. Nasr Mohammad Arif, who used *maṣlaḥah* in his study titled *Nadhari'āt al Tanmiyah al Siyāsiyyah al Mu'āṣirah* (Theories of Contemporary Political Development). Dr. Dina Abdelkader also pioneered in this field when she chose to use both *maṣlaḥah* and *maqāṣid* (the intents or end goals of the Shari'ah) as two sources of law to analyze the Islamic awakening and identify the influence of fiqh in the shaping of the contemporary Islamic phenomenon and its discourse.

I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Dina throughout the various stages of conception, preparation, and writing of this book. We met on numerous occasions to discuss a wide range of questions relating to *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah*—two sources that she considered, from the begin-

ning, to be the two most effective methodological tools for her research. Her background in political science and her knowledge of the methodologies of the social sciences helped her to understand these sources and to use them effectively as methodological tools and as sources of law. Indeed, she has successfully incorporated into her study a number of sources of Islamic jurisprudence and concepts from the Shari'ah, and in doing so, provides a good example of how such sources can be used as methodological tools in the study of social phenomena.

In this research, Dr. Dina has carried out an in-depth study of ijtihad and opinion (*ra'i*), and has attempted to analyze the debate between the schools of jurisprudence and the schools of hadith regarding restricted ijtihad and unrestricted opinion. She has also closely examined the sources of Islamic jurisprudence in order to explain the position and role of *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah* as a source of law, as well as in explaining or clarifying other rulings.

Dr. Dina has also succeeded in establishing links between fiqh and its impact in real life, by examining the nature of the interaction that takes place between a legal ruling and practice. She shows that the relationship between fiqh and reality is a quasi-dialectical one: on one hand, fiqh provides the legislation or rule for a given situation—which constitutes an answer to a question posed by reality; on the other hand, when an opinion or fatwa is issued, this has immediate effects on people's lives and their behavior, which, in turn, generates new questions which fiqh is required to answer. Needless to say that not all the specialists in fiqh or of any area of the social sciences understand or appreciate this relationship. However, Dr. Dina, being aware of this dialectical relationship between fiqh and reality, was able to realize that the Shari'ah has instilled social action into its jurisprudential and legislative systems. She also realized that by being based on the dialectical relationship between reality and fiqh, social justice has become part of the reality of Islam. However, this social justice disappears when it separates itself from reality or ignores it in any way; and this, in turn, leads to new attempts to reclaim it and re-establish it in reality.

Furthermore, Dr. Dina was able to link the phenomenon of Islamic awakening and Islamic movements—also known as "political Islam"—with the demand for social justice which the Shari'ah has implanted in the Muslim milieu, and which fiqh has reinforced and made an integral part of Islamic life. This understanding enabled her to avoid what other Muslim and non-Muslim scholars wrongly believed to be an abnormal

phenomenon. Indeed, from the outset, she rejected this idea and tried to prove that such a phenomenon is natural, emanating from a society which strives to establish justice by way of its jurisprudential and legislative systems, with the result that justice has become the first and most fundamental objective of the Islamic awakening.

She then set about explaining the contradiction that exists among the Muslim elite, where one group is Westernized and has adopted Western thought, and the other considers Islam as the appropriate means of reform. In doing so, she discovered that both groups have the same objective of realizing social justice. However, whereas the latter aims to realize social justice because it is a requirement of the Shari'ah and fiqh—as it is part of the intents and therefore may on no account be abandoned—the former favors any means advocated by Western thought that aim to bring about social change and social justice (whether it stems from dialectics, the liberal approach, or any other Western trends). Having explained the difference between the Islamists and the secularists in this regard, Dr. Dina then demonstrates that the Islamic approach is more likely to succeed in achieving and restoring social justice than any other imported solution, firstly, because it is linked to the Shari'ah's objectives, and secondly, because it finds support among the members of the Ummah who uphold the Shari'ah and accept its fatwas. As such, the Ummah will also be more enthusiastic about and responsive to the call for social change that will enable social justice to be achieved.

By using the principles of *maqāṣid* and *maṣlaḥah*, Dr. Dina has also shown the weakness and absurdity of the nation-state in the Islamic world and the extent to which it is isolated from and alien to Islamic societies. In doing so, she offers an excuse to those who are unable to feel any sense of belonging in the nation-state and refuse to pledge their allegiance to it because they do not believe it will meet their aims and aspirations. The nation-state is an aberration because it ignores the intents of the Shari'ah, which have become an inseparable part of the people's traditions, customs, cultural heritage and identity. Indeed, the disregard of these realities has caused the Ummah to lose its power and effectiveness and to become preoccupied with internal conflicts, forgetting the issues of development and social justice.

The conflicts that therefore naturally emerged among the different elite groups, as well as between the elite groups as a whole and the state that was seen as something alien to society, make the realization of democracy in these states virtually impossible. Indeed, by abandoning the Shari'ah

and neglecting its objectives, these so-called nation-states are causing friction to arise among their peoples and creating a rift between the rulers and the ruled. This leaves no chance for the establishment of any consultative or democratic system capable of organizing the available forces and achieving social justice, which is the alternative to the concept of welfare celebrated by capitalism.

Finally, this research also examines the Western theoretical approaches that have led the West to misunderstand the contemporary Muslim world. Indeed, Dr. Dina shows that writers and researchers in the West—whether they are Westerners or Muslims who have adopted western methodologies and approaches—have opted for methods of modernization, development, social progress and social interaction that have led them to produce studies and analyses that are out of touch with reality, and that do not even come close to understanding the actuality of the phenomenon, let alone providing a means to formulate a suitable opinion about it.

By following these methodologies, Dr. Dina has managed to produce results that not many researchers have been able to achieve by using other methodological approaches in the study of this phenomenon. Thus, her conclusions not only support the assertions of those who say that Islamic jurisprudence has methodologies and tools that can be used successfully for the study of social phenomena throughout the Muslim world; they also form the nucleus of an Islamic methodology that can be further developed to enable it to bring about the progress, that the social sciences are still striving to achieve. In this sense, we can say that this study provides useful guidelines for the revival of the Islamic discourse, as well as for achieving the social progress that the western world is endeavoring to introduce into the Islamic world. Indeed, social progress and dynamism cannot stem from sources that are alien to the beliefs, culture, and identity of the Ummah. Rather, the sources of Islamic jurisprudence which overlap with the Ummah's beliefs, aspirations, customs, and traditions can generate the dynamism that is an essential pre-condition for the emergence of any social development, change, progress or reform.

I believe the present research can constitute a working model for the study of social phenomena in the Islamic world. It can also show those who have opted for a Western approach how a great deal of resources have been wasted in studies that have only succeeded in adding to the confusion and ambiguity regarding the phenomenon of Islamic revival, simply because they failed to use the appropriate methodological tools.

May Allah grant success to Dr. Dina Abdelkader and her colleagues, and enable them to undertake and produce further serious and useful studies of this kind. May He also reward the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) for sponsoring this research, publishing it and making it available to other researchers and scholars.

All success is from Allah. Glorified and exalted is He.

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Introduction

The current domestic and international conditions of many Middle Eastern countries have increasingly led to visible Islamic activism or, as it is often called, an Islamic revival.[1] This study will focus on the relationship between the religion-based expectations of Muslim peoples and the current manifestations of Islamic activism. As a guide to the basic notion of social justice in Islam and to aid the reader in understanding the religion-based expectations of Muslim peoples the study will use Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh).[2]

In most calls for an Islamic state, the Shari'ah (Islamic law) is of primary importance for ensuring the legitimacy and justification for governmental change. Numerous ideological themes in Islamic jurisprudential teachings concern government; however, this study will analyze an augmentation to one of the sources of the law, namely, *maqāṣid al shari'ah* (the goals of the Shari'ah).

There are four sources of law in the Shari'ah: the Qur'an, the Hadith and Sunnah,[3] ijmā' (the consensus of *fuqahā'*/muftis on a decision), and *qiyās* (syllogism).

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1. *Revival* has become a generic term often used in the literature on Islamic movements; however, it is important to note that it implies that those movements are regressive or that they are an attempt to reactivate Islamic sentiment. Accordingly, the term *activism* is relatively impartial since it does not carry the same connotations about the movement in terms of direction, development, or time.

2. Fiqh, Shari'ah, and other words related to Islamic law will be defined later when they are analyzed in depth in the chapter on Islamic jurisprudence (Chapter 2).

3. Sunnah is an embodiment of the Prophet's sayings and practice, which are taken as a guide for Islamic law. It is important to note that Hadith means the sayings of the Prophet, while the Sunnah embodies his words and deeds. Therefore, the Sunnah represents a larger body of reference for Muslims.

The last source of law, especially, allows for the exercise of human reasoning. (This does not presume that the other three do not allow for human reasoning; however, relatively speaking, *qiyās* is the source of law that requires human deduction or inference.) *Qiyās* as a source of law has brought about notions such as ijtihād[4] and *ra'i*[5] in the formation of the Shari'ah. As a source of law, *qiyās* and its extensions provided a lively debate among *fuqahā'* throughout Islamic history. Among such extensions is the concept of *maqāṣid al shari'ah*, which provides the theoretical base for the study of Islamic activism in this research.

My study examines the supposition that, in Islamic societies, Islamic activism is a function of the extent to which state performance falls short of the principles of Islamic social justice as embodied in the *maqāṣid*. The later chapters contain case studies that are designed to clarify the broad lines of development of such movements and to suggest how Muslim societies may change under their influence. In many Muslims countries, Islamic activism is a social phenomenon that is gaining acceptance among the populace. However, tensions between the secular elite and Islamic activists exist, and the case studies will further explore those tensions. Although there are different opinions on the role of the state, research needs to examine how widespread support is for Islamic activism and whether its popularity is linked to the failure of the state to fulfill people's needs and address their grievances. Islamic activism includes all degrees and shades of political activism, from nonviolent demonstrations to violent attempts on public figures' lives, as well as threats to Western interests in each of the three countries being examined.

Another concept important to my research is Islamic social justice. Social justice in Islam, as mentioned earlier, is embodied in the Shari'ah. The Shari'ah's rules and mores are derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah (the Prophet's behavior in word and deed). The spirit of the Shari'ah was further explained by numerous *fuqahā'* (Muslim legal scholars). Exploration of the Shari'ah's essence has led many scholars to believe that some basic needs and rights are safeguarded by its rules. Those basic needs and rights were later compiled and developed by a number of Muslim scholars. However,

4. According to Netton, ijtihād is defined as: "In jurisprudence this term means the exercise of independent judgment unfettered by case law or past precedent. Its opposite is *taqlīd*, which means, literally, imitation. The word *ijtihād* derives from the same Arabic root as jihad." Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (1992, p. 117).

5. Netton's definition of *ra'i* is "Opinion, idea. In Islamic law *al ra'i* has the sense of personal opinion, individual judgment, or speculation not based on a recognized source of law." (Ibid., p. 212).

my study focuses on the role of the *maqāṣid* in explaining Islamic activism. Therefore, the state's performance will be measured by its ability to safeguard the tenets of the *maqāṣid*. The basic proposition is that Islamic activism is a function of the state's performance according to the Shari'ah's goals, which are the *maqāṣid*.

A review of Western social science literature reveals three theoretical approaches pertinent to analyzing current activism: modernization/economic development, cultural studies, and popular discontent/mass mobilization. Though the approaches overlap, for the purpose of analyzing and reviewing the literature, I will characterize each approach by referring to its most distinctive elements.

CHAPTER 1

Islamic Activism in Search of a Theory: A Review of the Literature

Introduction

Several theoretical approaches have been used to explain Islamic activism as a social phenomenon. The modernization/economic development approach to Islamic activism focuses on the effect of modernization and the possibilities of development in Muslim societies. The popular discontent approach focuses on the sources and degree of mobilization of Islamic activism. Cultural studies emphasize the customs and traditions of Islamic activism. Whether studies use the modernization/economic development, the mass mobilization, or the cultural and historical approach to explain Islamic activism, each approach includes elements of the others. They differ in the degree of focus and weight given to certain variables.

The research in this book emphasizes the importance of the cultural and historical backgrounds of Muslim peoples as sources of the current Islamic activist movements. That is, I look at Islamic activism through an understanding of Muslim societies' expectations of political systems and deduce the implications for development. Therefore, it is necessary to review the literature on "revival," as it is popularly termed, before further conjecture.

Current literature on Islam and Islamic revival can be divided by two normative positions. The first normative stance is characterized by the researcher's empathy with the culture of Muslim people and Islamic

activism, while the second normative position ridicules Islamic activism, mainly by stressing its violent elements.

The first normative stance is clearly exemplified in Burke and Lapidus's writing. For example, Burke (Burke and Lapidus 1988, p. 18) writes:

> In this mood of sober reexamination, it is appropriate to note a related factor that shapes the development of the field. The epistemological ground on which studies of popular political action in Islamic societies [are] situated is notoriously spongy and subject to periodic cave-ins. Not only is it difficult to spot a trend except by hindsight, because of the extent to which we are all prisoners of present ways of thinking, but it is also perilous to advance an explication of the so-called Islamic revival without reproducing the concerns of the ambient political culture of our own society with its deeply grounded fears and phantasms about Islam. The discourse on the Other, especially the Muslim Other, is politically saturated. This is not to disqualify non-Muslim appreciations of Islamic social movements, however. The views of the cultural outsider will invariably differ to some degree from those of an insider, but this fact by no means invalidates them. While we cannot escape completely from these constraints, a degree of methodological self-consciousness is indispensable.

Burke's "methodological self-consciousness" has affected mainly cultural studies on Islamic activism. The studies of modernization/economic development have been less susceptible to this change.

Modernization/Economic Development and Islamic Activism

A review of the literature on the causes of Islamic activism makes it increasingly evident that most contributions relate Islamic activism to modernization/economic development issues. Thus, my literature review will focus mainly on writings that link modernization to Islamic activism. The modernization/economic development explanation of Islamic activism basically reduces the process of development to the economic difficulties that many Third World countries are facing in the 1990s. This explanation characterizes the "universal crisis of modernity" or the "disruptive effect of modernization" as the main causal variable that explains the social phenomenon of Islamic activism. Therefore, the modernization/economic development approach overlooks the particular effect of religion on Islamic activism.

The modernization/economic development approach represents a general framework that would apply in many Third World countries. However, the approach needed in studying Islamic activism requires some degree of sensitivity to the religious specifics of the movement.

An example of the modernization/economic development approach is the latest work of Piscatori (1986, pp. 26–32), in which he identifies the causes of "revival" as follows:

> First, the defeat of Egypt, Syria, and Jordan in the 1967 [war] with Israel shattered the morale not only of the Arabs, who lost in a head to head fight with the enemy, but also of most Muslims, who lost the holy city of Jerusalem. Second, the process of development has been a contributing factor. It has stimulated the revival in two main ways: (a) it has often strained the social and political fabric, thereby leading people to turn to traditional symbols and rites as a way of comforting and orienting themselves, and (b) it has provided the means of speedy communication and easy dissemination of both domestic and international information. The third general reason for the present revival in addition to the intellectual and spiritual malaise since the 1967 war and the effects of the development process is that Muslim societies have been caught up in the universal crisis of modernity. Finally, the fourth general reason for the revival is that the conditions of political development in these societies have tended to heighten the importance of Islam as a political ideology. Because most of these societies are poor in institutions and dominated by unelected rulers, it is natural for those in power to look for a way of legitimating themselves.

Piscatori's last three reasons for revival connect the current movement with the "development process," "the universal crisis of modernity," and "conditions of political development."

Similarly, Dessouki and Cudsi (1981, p. 113) write, "The main hypothesis of [*Islam and Power*] is that the revival of Islamic groups and associations is invited by a particular social environment. It is a product of a crisis situation characterized by economic difficulties, moral and ideological confusion, and political instability."

In agreement with Dessouki, Vatikiotis (1981, p. 193) suggests:

> The current Islamic resurgence, with its reassertion of an essentially religious political identity in the sense of a declared adher-

> ence to the ethic and values of Islam, is the result of the disorientation caused by rapid economic development and the disaffection with social change brought about by the transplantation of certain aspects and appurtenances of modernity.

The "disruptive effects of modernization" as a causal variable are also discussed by Munson (1988, pp. 111–114), who describes those effects as (1) rapid economic growth, (2) education, (3) rural–urban migration, and (4) the demand for political participation.

The latest work of Tibi (1990, p. 127) identifies the North–South conflict, rapid social change, and a "legitimacy crisis with secular-oriented political systems," as the causes for Islamic activism. The first two reasons for Islamic activism are characteristic of the modernization/economic development theoretical analysis of Islamic activism.

In describing Islamic activists' backgrounds, Burell[6] (1989, p. 7) suggests that as a result of the growth of the population (especially youth),

> As individuals migrate from villages to overcrowded urban slums they face many problems and great hardship. Old friendships are broken and established ways of life are abandoned. It is, perhaps, not surprising that religion—with its promise of salvation—should become a more prominent feature in such uprooted communities.

Burrell thus assumes that the usual urbanization/modernization problems and the resulting feeling of anomie are causal to the rise of Islamic activism. In describing Sadat's assassins, Kepel (1985, p. 235) comments, "Education has taught them the mannerisms of modern life but not its techniques or spirit."

Hiro is yet another author who links modernization/economic development to Islamic activism. He explains that because of migration from rural to urban settings, there is an increase in Islamic activism. Hiro (1989, p. 274) says of Islamic activists that

> [the] reservoir of alienated masses packed into the poor quarters of urban centers provides a ready audience and recruiting ground for radical and revolutionary groups, secular and religious. Muslim fundamentalists try to rally the alienated and underprivileged on the basis of Islam.

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6. Burrell's depiction of Islamic activists is similar to that of Munson (1989, pp. 111–114).

Burke and Lapidus (1989, pp. 26–27) include three types of change that cause Islamic activism:

(1) the "indigenous" movement in a region, a rebound reaction to colonialism,
(2) the "incorporation" of the region into the world's market economy, and
(3) the legitimacy crisis of local elites who are viewed as agents of European power and hegemony.

All these authors have a common set of suppositions. First, as Dessouki writes, there is the shared assumption that Islamic activism is a "product" of a "crisis situation." The crisis situation is defined as the "universal crisis of modernity," "the process of development," "political development," "rapid social/economic change," or the "rapid process of urbanization." By defining Islamic activism as a product or reaction, the analyst implicitly judges the Islamic activist movement as an adverse and inimical reaction to modernization and development. That is, by assuming that Islamic activism is caused by the discomfort of modernization, such explanations also assume that Islamic activism, as a social movement, is discordant with modernization and development. This point is emphasized by Sarayi (1984, p. 120), who makes a distinction between Islam as the "principal depository" of tradition in the Middle East or "as being in opposition to scientific rationality, technological progress and even socio-economic development."

Second, the supposition that Islamic activists share "moral and ideological confusion," "disorientation, . . . and disaffection," and are perceived as "uprooted," "alienated and underprivileged" masses reflects the value-laden discourse of analysis, i.e., there is an assumption that Islamic activists are estranged from their creed, a temporary manifestation of social malaise and ideological incompetence.

Third, the perception that Islamic activism is a product of the rapid modernization/economic development process or that the actors involved in Islamic activism are "ideologically confused" assumes that Islamic activism is, for better or for worse, an aberration of sorts in the history of Muslim societies. Historically, however, the call for a return to Islamic mores, whether violent or nonviolent, has manifested itself in Muslim societies long before the advent of the so-called rapid modernization process, rapid social change, and rural–urban migration.

Fourth, the idea that Islamic activism is related to the North–South conflict or to the incorporation of the region into the world's market economy

is limited to economic differences and the resultant dynamics. It does not address the norms and cultural differences that must be taken into consideration when analyzing Muslim Third World countries and differentiating them from their counterparts in South American, Asian, or American Third World peoples.

Last, the definitions of modernization and development are not clear theoretically, and comparative studies differ on what development and change pertain to in any Third World country. Assuming that rapid change, development, and modernization are causal factors in Islamic activism is theoretically dubious, since there is no clear conception of a unilateral schema for modernization/economic development. In relation to the first common supposition previously mentioned, Islamic activism is perceived as a regressive force even though there are no clear definitions or empirical studies that specify what constitutes a "rapid modernization process." In other words, even though there are numerous studies on the stagnation of development in the Middle East/Muslim region, Islamic activism is not theoretically analyzed as a vehicle of change. Rather, the authors cited see Islamic activism as a regressive, traditionalist, and stagnant movement against the forces of development and change.

After discussing the general aspects of the modernization/economic development approach, it is necessary to focus on some specific assumptions that underlie this approach. By the phrases "Weberian school of analysis," "the Weberian paradigm," and "Weberian tradition," I mean the sociological school that used Weber's works to analyze developing societies—in other words, the social scientists who have linked Weber's theory to development at large. In Davis's[7] extrapolation of Weber's theory, for example, he explains that Weber studies development as a unilateral obstacle course that starts with traditional societies and ends with modern societies. However, Weber never characterized current Islamic activism as a traditional force. Contemporary social scientists such as Deeb (1992) and Dekmejian (1985) link traditionalism and charismatic authority to current Islamic movements and its leaders respectively. Studies that take such an approach link the traditional type of action[8] to Islamic activism. For exam-

7. Winston Davis's article "Religion and Development: Weber and East Asia Experience" is part of Myron Weiner and Samuel Huntington's edited *Understanding Political Development* (1987).

8. The four main types of action, according to Weber, are (1) Rational action related to a certain goal (*Zweckrational*), (2) Rational action related to a certain value (*Wertrational*), (3) Emotional action as a reflex reaction in certain situations, and (4) Traditional action that is related to customs and habit (see Aron, 1967, p. 220). Analysts who choose traditional action to characterize Islamic activism do not take into account that the *Zweckrational* or *Wertrational* Models could also apply to Islamic activism.

ple, Burke (Burke and Lapidus 1988, p. 20) writes: "Until the last few decades, the great majority of studies of social movements in Islamic societies tended to be situated within the Weberian tradition, though often without much methodological self-awareness."

After reviewing a number of development schools, Binder (1988, p. 78) also indicates this Weberian trend:

> [The] classic political mobilization model is pushed to a further extreme when it is argued that, ultimately, the strategic development decisions of the Egyptian political elite under Nasser were expressions of Nasser's personal preference, and were neither ideologically determined nor the resultant of some political process. The ultimate reduction of politics to particularistic psychological properties, especially as applied to the explanation of political underdevelopment in the Islamic world, has ideological implications which are by this time so well understood that they hardly need further repetition here. Suffice it to say that Middle Eastern political studies, despite some superficial change in terminology, remain remarkably impervious to scientific revolution. Twenty years from now we shall probably still be discussing the Nasserist period under the rubric of charismatic leadership.

Another offshoot of the "Weberian" analysis of Islamic activism is separating the rational from the irrational as illustrated by el-Kenz (1991, p. 104):

> One then proceeds to a classification of social ideologies according to the dyad religious base/rational base which are distributed among the various actor categories. To well-formed classes "sufficiently powerful and homogeneous" will correspond ideologies whose rational elements dominate; to the unstable, precarious, distorted classes will correspond those where the irrational element, particularly religion, will dominate.

Deeb makes further use of the Weberian tradition when she first claims, in reference to Islamic activism, that "there is nothing new in such movements." Deeb (1992, p. 55) then quotes Weber's *The Economic Ethic of the World Religions* to support her point:

> The conception of the idea of redemption as such is very old, if one understands by it a liberation from distress, hunger, drought, sickness, and ultimately from suffering and death. Yet redemption

> attained a specific significance only where it expressed a systematic and rationalized "image of the world" and represented a stand in the face of the world.

Weber's analysis points out that "redemption" gains significance when it presents itself as "a systematic and rationalized" field of action. A real stretching of the Weberian paradigm is evident in Dekmejian's work. In *Egypt Under Nasser* (1971), Dekmejian's introduction indicates that he will use "what Weber calls charismatic authority" to analyze Nasser's rule. Dekmejian (1971, p. 3) also mentions that it is hard to conceptualize charisma because of the "inability of democratic man to conceptualize such a foreign experience."

In his most recent work, *Islam in Revolution*, Dekmejian (1985, pp. 27–32) explains that because of "five catalysts: identity, legitimacy, elite misrule, class conflict and military impotence," Islamic activism is on the rise. Dekmejian (1985, p. 25) also writes that

> The ideologies of these movements are both comprehensive and rigid, reflecting the responses of typically charismatic leaders to situations of crisis. It is no mere accident that fundamentalist movements in various political contexts have acquired spiritual and sociopolitical potency when two interrelated conditions are met: the appearance of a leader of charismatic propensity and a society in deep turmoil. Significantly, the Islamist movements of the past have satisfied both of these conditions. The Islamist movements of the present are no exception.

Dekmejian (1985, p. 81) further describes the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood's Ḥassan al Bannā within the confines of such a framework:

> In keeping with the universal pattern of fundamentalist leadership, the Brotherhood constituted the organizational extension of Bannā's charismatic personality and the institutional reflection of his vision. Bannā's emergence typifies Weber's charismatic leader who appears in times of crisis with a message of social spiritual salvation.

According to Dekmejian, therefore, there are similarities between Nasser's Egypt and current Islamic activists in several Middle Eastern countries (including Egypt).[9] Dekmejian's work runs the risk of oversim-

9. In addition, Donohue (Esposito 1993, pp. 59–60) points out the similarities between Nasser's charismatic leadership (nationalist) and Khomeini's charismatic appeal (Islamist).

plifying the Weberian paradigm, because his argument (about two separate political phenomena in Egypt) claims that any popular movement is a result of charismatic leadership. That is, Dekmejian overlooks the fact that although most movements have their heroes, the appeal of the leader is only a partial explanation for the success of the movement. Also, Dekmejian, like other social scientists of the modernization/economic development school, links the Weberian paradigm (by using "charismatic authority") to his normative stance, which is the foreignness of this type of authority to democratic man. That is, democracy is linked to economic development as a necessary element. Dekmejian's argument, therefore, implies that the dynamics of a grassroots movement are directly related to the irrational processes of a society that run contradictory to rationality and its practice as embodied in "legal rational" institutions, democracy, and the values of liberalism.

Culture as an Interpretation of Islamic Activism

The problems of the modernization/economic development explanation further manifest themselves in the second genre of analysis, cultural studies of Islamic activism. Cultural explanations of Islamic activism emphasize several themes. First, the rejection of Western mores and culture by Islamic activists is interpreted as a sign that Islamic activism is in conflict with all Western values. Second, the separation between the functions of church and state in modern Europe is taken as a condition for modern societies that wish to safeguard equality and egalitarianism. The latter point overlaps with modernization/economic development's causal explanation of Islamic activism because the separation between the private self and the public self, or between the religious self and the secular self, is posed as a condition for becoming part of the modern world. Thus culture, and its subcomponent religion, are taken as contradictory forces that prevent Muslim peoples from joining the "secular" modern world. Culture and religion become a defensive mechanism, a shield that separates the identity of the individual and the society from foreign cultural experiences.

Tibi (1990, p. 130), for example, stresses that the growing need for religion is related to the instability of the environment and that religion maintains the identity of individuals in the process of social change. Tibi (1990, pp. 180–181) clarifies his analytic stance:

> My perspective, a self-confessedly normative one, is based on an egalitarian definition of cultures, even though the latter today displays different levels of development that are leading to the emergence of structures of global dominance among them. Despite my unequivocal rejection of the Islamic claim to dominance on the grounds both of its anachronism and of my inclination toward intercultural open-mindedness based on cultural pluralism (but not relativism).

Tibi (1990, p. 183) qualifies his claim of appreciating "intercultural open-mindedness" and "cultural pluralism" when he describes the current Islamic revival (relating it to North–South tension) as follows:

> This [North–South tension] involves a sociocultural conflict between industrial and nonindustrial cultures, insofar as the former dominate the latter by virtue of their technological scientific character. I may mention in support of this thesis the example of the specialization of the sacred in Muslim societies, insofar as it documents a sociocultural protest movement and a counter-acculturation.

Here Tibi, like writers who take the modernization/economic development approach, has chosen to define Islamic activism as a "counter-acculturation" movement, thus neglecting the history and the ethos of Islamic movements in the Middle East region before Islamic culture encountered the "technological scientific character" of industrial societies. Tibi identifies Islamic activism as a reaction to the forces of modernization in contemporary Muslim societies. He fails to recognize the cultural special elements of the movement because he begins his argument by stating that "North–South tensions" and the "sociocultural conflict between the industrial and nonindustrial cultures" are causal to many movements including Islamic activism.

In agreement with Tibi's ideas, Hunter (1988, p. 281) emphasizes that a sense of perceived threat to Islam and its role in society, along with the "failure of secular governments in many Muslim countries during the past sixty years to recognize the importance of Islam's place in the socio-economic, political and cultural fabric of their respective societies," leads to the reactionary revivalist movements. Hunter's analysis indicates that Islamic activism is a reaction to a perceived cultural threat.

The perception of threat and reaction to it is a thread that links the cultural studies of Islamic activism.

In addition to these notions of "perceived threat" and "counter-acculturation," the Durkheimian "alienation" theme is also used to describe Islamic activism. A stark example can be found in the work of Youssef (1985, p. 115), where he stresses that

> [C]onfusion and a lack of synthesis create a cultural vacuum in which people resort to the most bizarre mechanisms for coping with stress. It is no surprise therefore that al Jihad took advantage of the opportunity to provide an answer and deliver a "promise" to the bewildered population.

The bizarre mechanism referred to ties in with other claims of "irrationality" offered by most development/modernization and some cultural explanations of Islamic activism.

Gellner (1992, p. 72) defines "Muslim fundamentalism" as

> an enormously simple, powerful, earthy, sometimes cruel, absorbing, socially fortifying movement, which gives a sense of direction and orientation to millions of men and women, many of whom live lives of bitter poverty and are subject to harsh oppression. It enables them to adjust to a new anonymous mass society by identifying with the old, long-established High Culture of their own faith, and explaining their own deprivation and humiliation as a punishment for having strayed from the true path, rather than a consequence of never having found it; a disruption and disorientation is thus turned into a social and moral ascension, an attainment of identity and dignity.

Gellner's point at the beginning of the definition "enormously simple . . . movement," underlies the rest of his writing and analysis. The assumption that "Muslim fundamentalists" are bitterly poor is an undocumented claim (especially since Gellner's book was published in 1992). It has become increasingly evident that the poor masses are not the only sympathizers with Islamic activists. Islamic activism cuts across economic and social strata.[10] Gellner, like others, attributes current Islamic

10. Binder (1988, p. 242) argues: "The Islamic resurgence is a movement of laymen. It is a manifestation of an increasingly popular struggle of a growing number of bureaucrats, technicians, professionals, teachers, skilled workers, and even kulaks, who would assert themselves politically and attempt to reshape the state in terms of their own self-image."

activism to deprivation, humiliation, disruption, and discrimination. As a result, Islamic activism is viewed as a temporary malaise of sorts, or a more reaction to the deprivation and humiliation that are imposed on Muslim societies.

Gellner (1992, p. 92) identifies himself as an "enlightenment rationalist fundamentalist" and claims that

> when dealing with serious matters, when human lives and welfare are at stake, when major resources are being committed, the only kind of knowledge which may legitimately be used and invoked is that which satisfies the criteria of Enlightenment philosophy.

The Enlightenment philosophy, according to Gellner (1992, p. 90)

> strove to understand the economic and social success of the first modern societies, and so proposed a secular version of a salvation religion, a naturalistic doctrine of universally valid salvation, in which reason and nature replaced revelation. It did so because it perceived the role of new, secular knowledge in the new social order.

Gellner (1992, pp. 83–84) further claims that the "cognitive ethic" of the Enlightenment treats "all data, all information, all occasions, . . . alike: there are no privileged sources of illumination. The essence of sin is the making of exceptions. In other words, there is no and can be no revelation." On the other hand, Gellner's main argument throughout the book is that the cultural "relativist" and "postmodernist"[11] positions are "laughable": "Their insights apply to decorative rather than the real structural and functional aspects of our life (Gellner 1992, pp. 95–96).

Gellner (1992, p. 95) respects Islamic fundamentalists "both as fellow recognizers of the uniqueness of truth, who avoid the facile self-deception of universal relativism, and as our intellectual ancestors."

Gellner's contribution is theoretically significant because of its analysis of the three main current ideologies of postmodernism, religion (especially Islamic fundamentalism), and "Enlightenment rationalist fundamentalism."[12] His refutation and dismantling of cultural relativism

11. Gellner explains that cultural relativists/postmodernists are researchers who stress the need to evaluate norms and mores in their cultural context. That is, the cultural relativists are concerned with the cultural aspects of different societies rather than with the universality of any social issue. Therefore the cultural relativists are more liberal in their interpretations of different societies than are "religious fundamentalists" or "enlightenment rationalist fundamentalists," as explained in Gellner's writing.

12. Gellner uses the term "Enlightenment rationalist fundamentalism" interchangeably with "reason" as the title of his book suggests: *Postmodernism, Religion, and Reason.*

and postmodernism are representative of the normative position mentioned earlier that ridicules and discredits Islamic activists' "rationality" as a social movement.

Binder's writing is similar to Gellner's, although it is focused on development theory rather than on the broader scheme of analysis that Gellner adopts. Thus both Binder and Gellner criticize the cultural relativists' arguments. While Gellner does not directly critique Said's *Orientalism* as Binder does,[13] he implies such criticism throughout his argument against relativists. Binder does not clarify his ideological stance as Gellner does; the latter clearly identifies himself as a "Enlightenment rationalist fundamentalist" which, according to Gellner, means one who does not believe in any privileged sources of information that should direct human behavior. Gellner is against a divine set of rules and mores that guide human behavior. Rather, he appreciates the equality of all sources of knowledge in the Enlightenment period in Europe, which he also qualifies as "rational." Gellner calls for the return to the age of Enlightenment and the adoption of "rationality" as a guideline in complying with social rules and mores.

Both the differentiation between rational and irrational social choices and the line drawn between secular and religious societies affect the evaluation of Islamic activism as a movement. Gellner's attack on cultural relativists represents the epitome of separating the "religious fundamentalists" from the "enlightenment rationalist fundamentalists." Emphasis on the cultural aspects of the Islamic activist movements also overlooks the modernization factors that could have affected them, i.e., neither modernization/economic development nor cultural causation alone is sufficient to explain the complexity and depth of the social phenomenon of Islamic activism.

13. In his chapter titled "Deconstructing Orientalism," Binder (1988, p. 120–21) severely criticizes Said's work:

> There are a number of reasons that might explain why Said says nothing about Islam. He might have intended to write only of the West. He might not know enough about Islam. He might have felt that it was sufficient instead to name those of whose work he approves. He might have felt it best to say nothing rather than to say some one thing. He might believe that it is inappropriate or impossible or even hostile for any outsider to speak of a belief system which he does not share. Whatever his reason, Said says nothing and says nothing about why he says nothing, and it is this double silence which suggests an anomaly, a kind of paradox, an *aporia* or the very condition which makes Said's critical discourse possible. Of course it may be true that if Said were to have written anything about Islam, he might have been able to write nothing about orientalism.

The Popular Discontent Approach to Explaining Islamic Activism

A third approach looks on popular discontent/mass mobilization as the main source of current Islamic activism. Few works take this approach, with the exception of studies on the Iranian Islamic movement.[14]

Though the studies that link Islamic activism to popular discontent are few, they explain Islamic activism using multiple causal factors. They have fewer limitations than do other approaches because the concept of popular discontent allows for the inclusion of modernization/economic development problems, cultural differences, basic needs, and human rights issues. Thus popular discontent reflects the cumulative grievances that could have affected the current Islamic activist movements.

One of the most recent studies on the Iranian revolution (Dabashi 1993, p. 489) for example, links the revolution to the general Islamic activism mood:

> Beyond its material causes, the ideological, mythical, and theological dimensions of a revolution give communal expressions to man's most moving precept: *Discontent. A deeply rooted desire to change, to alter, to modify, to transgress, and ultimately to become another seems to lie beneath every veneer of calm civility that the status quo demands and rewards.* Permanent revolution is simply the political expression of a more abiding truth, which is permanent change in one's self-understanding. Here, on this borderline, the conservative, the liberal, and the revolutionary all concur. Re-enacting "Islam itself," the Islamic Ideology is the historical case of the hermeneutic conversation between the authority of the ideological interpreter and the legitimacy of the remembered text—all to (redefine) man's quintessential discontent with merely being in-the-world. The text in the Islamic case is much more than the Quran and the Hadith, etc. It is that palaverous constellation of symbolics and sensibilities, figures and figurations of authority, that at every historical conjunction its believers obediently call "Islam," or, as in the modernity of its manifestation, the Islamic ideology. That term of disenchantment

14. Iran is excluded from my research because it had already gone through its revolution in 1979. That is, the other countries chosen in this study have not gone through massive change brought about by Islamic activists. My research compares countries where Islamic activism is in opposition to current political systems.

> registers the radicality of contemporary Muslims' bewildering discontent.

Dabashi links the disenchantment of Islamic activists in Iran to their discontent with "merely being in-the-world." That is, he offers discontent as a direct cause of the phenomenon of Islamic activism. Thus, unlike modernization/economic development analysts and cultural analysts, he does not treat Islamic activism as a rebound effect of "rapid modernization" or as a cultural defense mechanism. Although Dabashi qualifies this form of discontent as an inherent psychological state of "merely being in-the-world," he addresses the Islamic movement as a dynamic changing force that has existed throughout the years. To Dabashi it is not a novelty, but rather a manifestation of humanity's continued struggle with existentialism and purpose.

Though the reader may object to any mystical, inherent qualifications of discontent (since such notions fail to offer any causality in explaining Islamic activism), it is important to note that Dabashi addresses the continuity of Islamic activism as a phenomenon. Dabashi's contribution to the literature on Islamic activism lies in his emphasis on the discontent of the people as a determining factor in explaining the reasons for and the degree of strength of the movement.

Batran (1989, p. 10) takes Dabashi's ideas a step further when he acknowledges that:

> Islamic revolutions in Africa have a long tradition extending into the eighth century—a theme that runs uninterrupted across the moving frontiers of the history of Islam in Africa. Whenever African Muslims faced critical situations, they invoked that common thread, Islam, to provide the elixir for all their society's ailments.

Batran (1989, p. 39) later expands his explanation: "Hence mass sufferings, popular indignation and frustrated nationalistic sentiments were often times released, under the direction of self-proclaimed Mahdis or Mujaddids (Renewers), in waves of revolutionary action." Batran does not link Dabashi's discontent to an inherent mystical form of disenchantment. Rather, he links it to specific conditions: "mass sufferings, popular indignation and frustrated nationalist sentiments." This is a unique stance, distinguishable from modernization/economic development and cultural causal explanations. Batran stresses an element seldom recognized by the modernization/economic development and cultural explanations: mass suffering and popular indignation. Modernization/economic development

explanations usually describe such movements as irrational, traditional reactions to a perceived threat of modernization, development, and democratic practice.

Goldberg (1992) challenges the theoretical suppositions of modernization/economic development and the cultural explanations of Islamic activism (especially the first). Goldberg (1992, p. 211) compares Calvin's movement to the Muslim Brotherhood's religious ideas in Egypt, beginning with this observation:

> Egypt has experienced inflation, stagnation, low productivity, crowding and increased income inequity in the very recent period. Gilles Kepel and Eric Davis argue that the Islamist program arises from the declining economic situation of group members or (in Davis' words) "pressurization." Such arguments . . . unfortunately do not explain the development of this ideology in the 1950s and 1960s, when the economic situation was improving for all Egyptians. It also cannot explain the militants' manifest and self-conscious understanding that their movement is the result of Nasserism's political victory rather than its economic failure.

Goldberg (1992, p. 213) further clarifies his argument:

> It therefore seems to me to make less sense to argue that these groups respond to social or economic "pressure" than they responded—as did the early Protestant groups—to the process of political centralization that enhanced the arbitrary power of the political elite and especially the head of state.

Goldberg's challenge to current literature on Islamic activism distinguishes his study because he does not ignore the existence of Islamic activism in the 1950s and 1960s, when Egyptian society briefly tasted the fruits of a growing economy. Goldberg thus magnifies the problems that the modernization/economic development approach encounters when explaining Islamic activism. Instead, he relies on the historical existence of such movements when "economic pressurization" was not a factor affecting Islamic activism.

An Analysis of the Literature

In summation of the aforementioned approaches used to explain Islamic activism, I will attempt to clarify some limitations of each analytical perspective. As described above, two normative stands underlie the analysis of Islamic activism. One tends to sympathize with the cultural component of Islamic activism (e.g., Esposito, Lapidus and Burke, and Haddad); the other rejects the movements' premises, not to mention their thought, i.e., it rejects Islamic activists' attachment to religious values and therefore rejects the ideas that are propagated by Islamic activists (e.g., Tibi, Binder, Lawrence, Kepel, and Gellner).

Three major approaches explain Islamic activism: modernization/economic development, cultural, and popular discontent. The first two approaches are the more prominent and frequently used explanations for Islamic activism, as indicated in the literature review.

The popular discontent explanation is a distinctive approach to understanding Islamic activism, because it addresses the phenomenon with the awareness that the movement has a wide popular base. The movement is related to social, psychological, economic, and cultural variables (i.e., it recognizes the holistic nature of mankind and, therefore, their cumulative grievances that invoke in them the need to change). Another important element in the popular discontent approach is that it recognizes the state's failure to perform, which constitutes the basic hypothesis for my study.

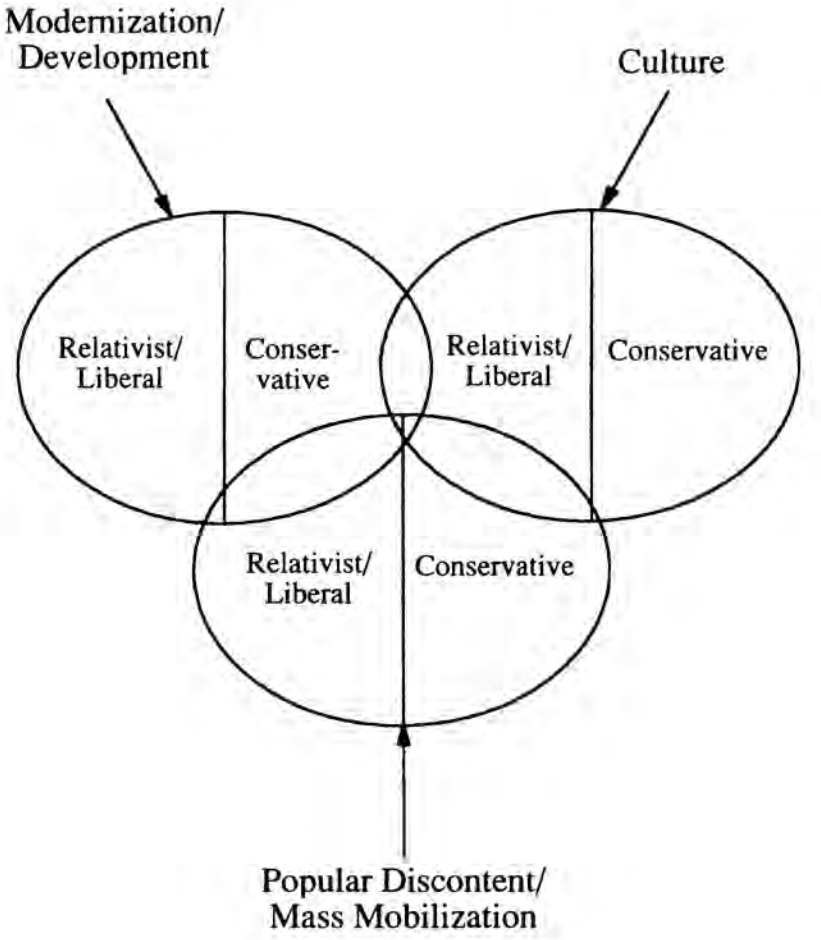
The three causal theories of Islamic activism coexist in current literature. A graphic presentation of the literature on Islamic activism is presented in Diagram 1 on page 18.

The two more common approaches share an important factor, which I shall use as a point of departure. Whether one considers the sympathetic/relativist or the conservative view in Islamic activism literature, one finds rigidly drawn lines of duality, of differentiation, of Us versus Them. This duality is captured by Binder (1988, p. 5):

> the outstanding characteristic of Islamic political revival . . . is its rejection of Western liberal pretensions and practices. The outstanding characteristic of the contemporary Islamic political revival is that it points toward the end of a dialogue.

Diagram 1

The Effect of Normative Underpinnings
on Causal Approaches of Islamic Activism



It is precisely the alleged "end of a dialogue" that draws attention to the danger of utilizing the endless dualism of rational versus irrational, developed versus underdeveloped, sacred versus profane, secular versus religious. "The end of a dialogue" adds a pessimistic hue to current and future studies of Islamic activism. A more optimistic stance will allow for an understanding of the common ground between "Western liberal pretensions" and the "Islamic political revival."

Stressing the duality of modes of thought and action, and differentiating between societies by claiming that the relativity of action and thought is particular to each society, becomes a way of escaping from dialog with the Other. Engaging with the Other in dialog requires a balanced position, whereby one is neither too much of a cultural relativist nor a cultural conservative. Therefore, I will attempt to tread a careful balance in order to understand Islamic activism in both its universal and relative aspects. My goal is to comprehend, explain, and—most importantly—engage in a dialog with the Other, the Muslim activists, by analyzing their expressed grievances and expectations.

Whether one considers issues of modernization or cultural phenomena, one would finally end up using some measure of normative judgment. If scholars assume a priori that Islamic activism is a reaction either to modernization problems or to cultural disorientation, they implicitly accept either a fundamentalist or cultural relativist position. Arguments that either modernization or culture is causal to Islamic activism make it harder to analyze the phenomenon. Therefore, by using popular discontent to explain Islamic activism, one avoids the normative constraints that accompany the other two approaches.

The popular discontent/mass mobilization approach also provides an analytical framework that can explain change. While the modernization/economic development and cultural approaches imply that Islamic activism is an aberration of sorts, a reflex reaction to "modernization," "urbanization," and "counter-acculturation," emphasizing popular discontent/mass mobilization directs attention to all the dynamics of change that prevail in Muslim societies today.

My basic hypothesis is that the extent of Islamic activism is a function of the extent to which state performance in Islamic societies falls short of the principles of Islamic social justice as embodied in the *maqāṣid*. Analysis of the case studies will help in envisioning the broad lines of the development of such movements and how Muslim societies will thereby change.

The Link between Popular Discontent/Mass Mobilization Theory and the Analytical Framework of the Proposed Study

Though there are good reasons for emphasizing popular discontent as a cause of Islamic activism, one has to be cautious regarding a pitfall of this approach. The popular discontent approach to explaining Islamic activism has not yet been connected to mass mobilization/mass movement theory.

It is necessary now to link the idea that Islamic activism is caused by popular discontent to the theoretical literature on mass movements. Dabashi (1993) writes about the psychological component of discontent and relates it to the state of "merely being in-the-world" while Batran (1989) comes closer to linking mass mobilization theory to his work. However, the comparative analytical framework offered in Goldstone, Gurr, and Moshiri (1991, p. 37) encourages the need to study Islamic activism from such a perspective.

Goldstone defines three conditions as indicators of state breakdown and the simultaneous and consequent process of revolution: "(1) fiscal distress, (2) elite alienation and conflict, and (3) a high potential for mobilization of the populace."[15] These three conditions are mentioned in a number of works on Islamic activist movements. Haddad (1991, p. 10), for example, indicates that "the discussion of religious topics has entered the public realm" and that the "revivalist movement itself is very much that of the lay population." Binder (1988, p. 242) also writes: "The Islamic resurgence is a movement of laymen. It is a manifestation of an increasingly popular struggle of a growing number of bureaucrats, technicians, profes-

15. Gurr and Goldstone (Goldstone, Gurr, and Moshiri 1991, pp. 346–347) also conclude,

> Concrete signs of impending state crisis are not invisible, although the actual attitudes of people may be concealed. Thus, rather than wait for clear signs of widespread overt opposition, superpowers should realize that regimes that show multiple symptoms of an impending crisis, such as a lack of positive accomplishments, inadequate resources or foreign dependency, corruption, exclusion, and counter-mobilization, are in deep trouble and cannot be shored up indefinitely. If the basic regime attitudes and structures that produced these symptoms cannot be rectified, one should brace for the emergence of a revolutionary struggle in such states.

The authors' remark is also adequate and applicable in reference to current Islamic Activist (IA) movements throughout the Middle East with regard to US foreign policy in particular and a number of European countries' foreign policy (e.g., French policy in North African countries).

sionals, teachers, skilled workers, and even kulaks, who would assert themselves politically and attempt to reshape the state in terms of their own self-image."

Michael Hudson (1980, p. 24) writes that Islam is gaining acceptance as a political ideology for opposition movements, because it is somewhat congenial to other political ideologies. Hudson stresses the potency of Islam as an ideology that is capable of mobilizing the masses. In agreement with Hudson, Williams (1980, pp. 84–85) concludes his research on Islamic activism in Egypt by pointing out the reasons that impel people to examine the possibilities for change. He emphasizes that frustration, despair, loss, and the inability of the government to provide for the people's needs will lead to "a new Egyptian revolution."[16]

Esposito's later work (1992, pp. 22–23) also points out the strength of Islamic activism as a mass movement:

> In the nineties Islamic revivalism has ceased to be restricted to small, marginal organizations on the periphery of society and instead has become part of mainstream Muslim society, producing a new class of modern-educated but Islamically oriented elites who work alongside, and at times in coalitions with, their secular counterparts. Revivalism continues to grow as a broad-based socio-religious movement, functioning today in virtually every Muslim country and transnationally.

Esposito (1992, p. 100) stresses elements of the three preconditions for revolutions when he describes Islamic activism in Egypt as follows:

> The most important characteristic of Islamic revivalism in Egypt in the nineties is the extent to which revivalism has become part and parcel of moderate mainstream life and society, rather than a marginal phenomenon limited to small groups or organizations. No longer restricted to the lower middle class, renewed awareness and concern about leading a more Islamically informed way of life can also be found among the middle and upper class, educated and uneducated, peasants and professionals, young and old, women and men. They are active in Qur'an study groups (run by both women and men), Sufi gatherings, mosques, and private associations. As a

16. Hudson and Williams' articles were both published in *Islam and Development* (Esposito 1980). Both authors reflect the relatively less active period of IA, especially after Sadat's assassination in 1981 and the numerous assassinations and riots that followed in Egypt and the escalation of IA in Algeria, Tunisia, the Occupied Territories, and Jordan.

> result, Islamic identity is expressed not only in formal religious practices but also in the social services offered by psychiatric and drug rehabilitation centers, dental clinics, day-care centers, legal aid societies, and organizations which provide subsidized housing and food distribution or run banks and investment houses.

Thus, as indicated in the literature on Islamic activism, the three conditions are more than evident in a number of Muslim societies. Fiscal distress as well as elite alienation and the mobilization of the populace are becoming increasingly evident indicators of change in Muslim societies. It is not surprising to find the masses relying on the services and institutions offered by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, for example, where this phenomenon is indicative of both elite alienation and a high probability of potential mass-mobilization.

The logical question then about Islamic activism is: If there is change, what will this change entail? As Butterworth (1982, p. 110) notes in his article "Prudence versus Legitimacy," there are no progressive steps toward an understanding of how social institutions will function beyond rallying popular support, thus indicating the need for a "third wave of thinkers" to address particular details of justice according to the Divine Law (Shari'ah). Butterworth's call for clarity is later echoed by a number of researchers on Islamic activism such as Haddad (1991, p. 7) in her bibliographic survey of the literature on Islamic activism, where she stresses that "change [in Muslim nations] is imperative." She also indicates, however, that the challenging task is to understand "change to what?" (Haddad 1991, p. 7).

Esposito (1992, p. 99) also recognizes the lack of a "specific concrete alternative program" for the Islamic activists. He criticizes their focus on the failures of the incumbent government and religio-social issues rather than of "defining the nature of an Islamic state and its institutions.

Butterworth (1992, p. 36) also criticizes current Islamic political thought:

> Their rhetoric, addressed now more than ever to the unlearned masses of citizens, speaks only of what might be and ignores the practical, procedural issues of how these goals are to be reached without harming citizens along the way. It also ignores the major question of how to provide for prudent decisions once the goal of Islamic government has been reached . . . yet properly understood, it is against precisely this tendency to ignore procedural safeguards that Western criticism of political Islam is addressed.

Hence, using popular discontent to explain Islamic activism is plausible for a number of reasons:

(1) it avoids the analytical constraints that affect the modernization/economic development and cultural approaches,
(2) it is not confined to the idea that Islamic activism is a tangential, temporary state of malaise; rather, it allows for analyzing Islamic activism as a mainstream, grassroots movement,[17] and
(3) the popular discontent approach calls attention to the degree of alienation of the elite from the masses and helps explain the social forces leading to the formation of indigenous institutions, i.e., creating a state within a state.

In short, studying the scope and sources of mass mobilization in Muslim societies evaluates what Esposito calls "the quiet revolution" of Islamic activism.

On the other hand, Butterworth's, Haddad's, and Esposito's concern with a detailed, "concrete alternative program" or more bluntly "change to what?" remains to be addressed. This requires an understanding of the nature of change as a primary step.

Although Butterworth, Haddad, and Esposito justifiably demand "change to what?" all Islamic movements have stressed the necessity of implementing God's law on Earth (*Sharī'at Allāh fī al 'arḍ*). Though the literature on Islamic activism recognizes the importance in those movements of implementing Islamic law, there has been little effort to decipher or understand the rudiments of that law and what it could entail for a Muslim community in terms of social justice. The state of the art literature on Islamic activism (Binder 1988, p. 131) indicates the importance of the Shari'ah as follows:

> A key doctrinal precondition for the contemporary reassertion of Islamic fundamentalism is whether under contemporary historical conditions, it is feasible to establish and maintain an ideal, Islamic government. An ideal Islamic government is one in which the law may be determined with absolute certainty so that Muslims are left in no doubt about what they must do and what they must not do.

17. Esposito underscores this in his book *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (1992, pp. 199–200, 209–210).

Esposito (1992, p. 118) also draws attention to the importance of Islamic law:

> Is the implementation of Islam in state and society to be a restoration or a reformation, the resurrection of past doctrines and laws or the reconstruction of new models rooted in faith but appropriate to the changed circumstances of life today? The issue is clear when we look at the question of Islamic law. For many, the Islamic character of the state is determined by the implementation of Islamic law.

Haddad (1991, p. 15) criticizes the literature on Islamic activism for neglecting the issue of Islamic law:

> [I]n order to understand the dynamic of revival, we need more analysis of the issues being raised in the current debate over the reinstitution of the Shari'ah in countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, and Indonesia. Given the fact that the public discussion of these issues uses familiar Islamic language and themes, scholars have been tempted to dismiss the revivalists as seeking to return the Muslim community to the seventh century. It is clear that for most revivalist writers, however, this is not the case, and the exegetical and contextual analysis of the language they are using makes it clear that they are seeking a better understanding of the problems besetting their societies and of the ways in which traditional Islamic sources can be interpreted so as to help solve them.

Haddad emphasizes the importance of implementing Islamic law for Islamic activists, regardless of their differences. The "ideal blueprint for the good society" for Islamic activists is the Shari'ah. However, Haddad (1991, p. 53) notes that Islamic activists "differ in what they wish to implement. Conservatives tend to regard much of the corpus of the traditional Islamic law as binding. Reformers note that the law is subject to reinterpretation, ijtihād, and reform."

The latter (the reformers') stance lies at the crux of this research since it uses Islamic jurisprudential teachings (fiqh) to comprehend the rudiments of social justice in a Muslim society. Haddad and Dabashi both accentuate the grievances of Islamic activists, which are hypothesized to be causal to the rise of Islamic activism as a movement in several Muslim societies, as is proposed in this study. Consonant with Esposito's later work (Esposito, 1992), Haddad describes current Islamic activism:

> [T]he strength of contemporary revivalism remains with a growing moderate majority of Islamic activists whose activities have become part of mainstream Muslim life. Their vision of Islam is holistic. They believe that a faithful, righteous Islamic community is one that observes God's mandate to worship Him and to create a *socially just society*. This long-term process, which is weaving its way into political and social institutions, will have significance both for the development of Muslim societies and for their relationship with the West.

An understanding of what the basics of social justice entail under Islamic law might throw light on the inception of grievances in Muslim societies and could eventually help to explain current activism. Thus, the other side of the coin is injustice or, as Dabashi puts it, *ẓulm*, which according to Islamic activists is the cause of the current social/political phenomenon that is supposedly gaining momentum and popularity in Muslim societies.

Dabashi (1993, p. 506) captures the essence of the Iranian revolution[18] as follows:

> Perhaps the single most important theme in the mobilizing rhetoric of "the Islamic Ideology" was its insistence on the dichotomous battle between "justice" on the side of the revolutionaries and "injustice" on the part of the established regime. *Ẓulm*, Persian and Arabic for injustice, was the primary accusation against the monarch (the Shah of Iran) and his tyrannical rule. The Shah's government was *ipso facto* rendered illegitimate. This illegitimacy pronounced on moral, not primarily political grounds, the language of revolt then inevitably assumes an ethical posture that, in effect, renders any alternative invalid. Such a moral consolidation of revolutionary forces thus engages its enemies not only at the level of the established order but also at the level of its ideological competitors: the secular revolutionaries—radical or liberal.

It is precisely this concept of *ẓulm* that may be linked to Islamic activism. The separation between moral and political illegitimacy is built on the presupposition that the religious/moral and political arenas are separate. As Haddad notes, contemporary Islamic activists consider Islam a

18. In my opinion, it is reflective of Islamic activists' sentiments in other contemporary Muslim societies as well.

holistic order, so that the moral righteousness of the Islamic community is part and parcel of the politically and socially just society.

Thus, upon examination of the literature and in conjunction with previously discussed materials, this study will attempt to address Islamic activism as a mass movement that covers the spectrum from demonstrations of violence to nonviolent expressions of opposition. The study uses the popular discontent approach mentioned earlier to address the phenomenon without the value-laden assumptions of modernization versus traditionalism or rational versus irrational. As Haddad (1991, pp. 53–54) indicates, the Islamic activists call for creating a "socially just society," and this society's righteousness and sense of justice could only be upheld by the Shari'ah.

Conclusion

The current phenomenon of Islamic activism in many predominantly Muslim societies and societies that have Muslim minorities is not a recent or "new" ideological phase.[19] Historically, movements of different Muslim groups have been part of the ebb and flow of life in most Muslim societies.

As a student of the social sciences, I will study and examine the traditional legal aspects of Islamic social justice. The Islamic activists' insistence that the Shari'ah be reinstated as the supreme law of the land is a direct cause of my focus on *maqāṣid al shari'ah* (the end goals of Islamic law), since the *maqāṣid al shari'ah* represent the political, social, and economic ethos of Islamic jurisprudence.

The significance of my study lies in its effort to answer the following questions: What are the end goals for which Muslim societies strive? Could the lack of or decline in social rights according to *maqāṣid al shari'ah* be the most important causal variable for the rise of Muslim militancy in many Muslim societies? What are the commonalities between the Western understanding of basic needs, social justice, and the Islamic perception of those values. Are the developmental paths of Muslim societies dependent on and related to Islamic law?

19. Therefore the words "revival" and "resurgence" are not used in this research.

To answer these questions, it is necessary to comprehend the frame of reference and the body of knowledge that Muslim activists draw upon. Chapter 2 will consequently aim at:

(1) understanding the importance of the Shari'ah to current Islamic movements,
(2) explaining the links between sources of the Shari'ah and the end goals of the Shari'ah (*maqāṣid al shari'ah*),
(3) explaining the four jurisprudential (*madhāhib* in fiqh) sources and how the *maqāṣid* relate to them,
(4) sketching the theoretical agreements and disagreements among the *fuqahā'* (legal scholars) on *maqāṣid al shari'ah*, and
(5) justifying the use of the *maqāṣid* in analyzing current Islamic activism.

Chapter 3 will focus on the methodological aspects of my research, including a theoretical specification of the *maqāṣid* and their operationalization in this study. Chapters 4 through 6 will then focus on each individual country, and chapter 7 will present my conclusion.

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